

Apologetics with a Secular World



Ministry Formation - 2023
Diocese of Rockford
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A Prayer Before Study

St. Thomas Aquinas

O God, Creator of all things, true source of light and wisdom, graciously let a ray of your light penetrate the darkness of my understanding. Give me a keen intellect, a retentive memory, and the ability to grasp things correctly and fundamentally. Give me the talent of being exact in my explanations and the ability to express myself with thoroughness and charm. Point out the beginning, direct the progress, and perfect my work. We ask you this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

APOLOGIZE



Always be prepared to
make a defense (*apologia*)
to anyone who asks you
for a reason for the hope
that is in you . . . (1 Peter
3:15)

Topics in Apologetics -

1. Three basic skills for being an effective communicator of the Catholic faith
2. Relativism - What is Truth?
3. Science vs. Faith
4. Theistic evidences
5. Marriage & Family
 - ✓ Same-sex marriage
 - ✓ Contraception
6. Human Sexuality
 - ✓ Same-sex attraction
 - ✓ Transgenderism
7. Life Issues
 - ✓ Abortion

Three Basic Skills

How to be an effective communicator of the faith

Three skills – **knowledge**,
an informed mind;
wisdom, an artful method;
and **character**, an
attractive manner

Questions to Ask

Four Questions Essential to Any
Good Conversation

Wisdom = artful method

- 1) “What do you believe?”= **Information**
 - 2) “Why do you think that’s true?”
“How did you come to believe that?”= **Information/Explanation**
 - 3) “What did you mean by [fill in the blank]?”= **Clarification**
 - 4) “What would you say to someone who says [fill in the blank]?” = **Indirect challenge**
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How to Criticize Another Person's View

- 1) Courtesy
- 2) Clarity
- 3) Common Ground
- 4) Criticism

1. Your aim is to arrive at truth, not to conquer the person you're talking with.
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How to Criticize Another Person's View

- 1) Courtesy
- 2) Clarity
- 3) Common Ground
- 4) Criticism

2. You should attempt to re-express your conversation partner's position so clearly, vividly, and fairly that she/he says, "Thanks, I wish I'd thought of putting it that way."
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How to Criticize Another Person's View

- 1) Courtesy
- 2) Clarity
- 3) Common Ground
- 4) Criticism

3. You should list any points of agreement (especially if they are not matters of general or widespread agreement).
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How to Criticize Another Person's View

- 1) Courtesy
- 2) Clarity
- 3) Common Ground
- 4) Criticism

4. You should mention anything you have learned from your conversation partner.
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How to Criticize Another Person's View

- 1) Courtesy
- 2) Clarity
- 3) Common Ground
- 4) Criticism

5. Only then are you permitted to say so much as a word of rebuttal or criticism.
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Relativism

What is Truth?

Relativism is the idea that there is no objective truth, that each individual decides for himself or herself what is true.

Truth claims are subjective - reflecting personal feelings, opinions, desires.



Subjective

Ben & Jerry's Cherry Garcia ice cream is absolutely delicious

- This is not a claim about the object = the ice cream
- This is a claim about the subject = me

Objective

- Two plus two equals four
- Kansas is in the United States
- One ought not to kill an innocent person
- Cheating on your spouse is wrong
- Cribbing answers off someone else's exam is not right

- **Moral relativism** ✓ Moral rules are merely personal preferences and/or the result of one's cultural, sexual, or ethnic orientation.
- is the view that when it comes to questions of morality, there are no absolutes and no objective right or wrong.

WITHOUT A SHARED OBJECTIVE STANDARD
(OR EVEN BELIEF THAT ONE EXISTS), THERE
IS NOTHING TO APPEAL TO AND THEREFORE
NO WAY TO RATIONALLY PERSUADE
SOMEONE WHO DISAGREES WITH YOU

MORAL DISCUSSIONS BECOMES A MATTER
OF GIVING EXPRESSION TO EMOTIONS AND
INTIMIDATION

CONFLICTING CLAIMS OF MORALITY AND
IDENTITY THEREFORE APPEAR
IRRECONCILABLE

ALL THAT'S LEFT IS THE USE OF
POWER TO SHUT YOUR OPPONENT
DOWN USING TECHNIQUES TO
PROMOTE OUR PARTICULAR TRIBE
(INCLUDING SHOUTING DOWN
OPPONENTS, PROTECTING OURSELVES
FROM HEARING VIEWS FROM OUTSIDE
OUR COMMUNITY, AND DRIVING OUT
PEOPLE WHO DISAGREE WITH US).





Science vs. Faith

Are Reason and Religion enemies?

What are the supposed sources of conflict?

The Biblical Story of Creation

Genesis 1-2

*The Creation Story = answers the
questions “Who” and “Why” not
“When” and “How”*



The Catholic Vision of the Cosmos

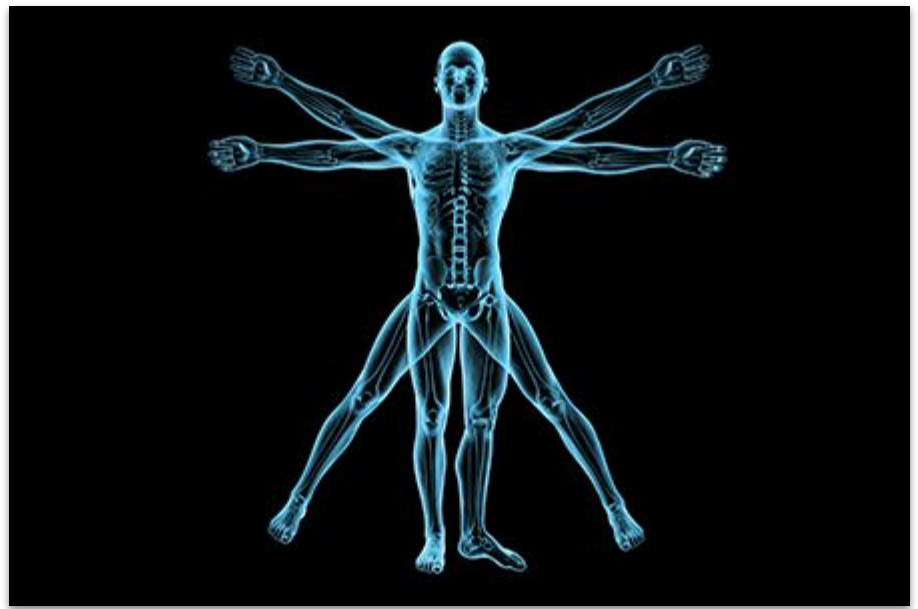
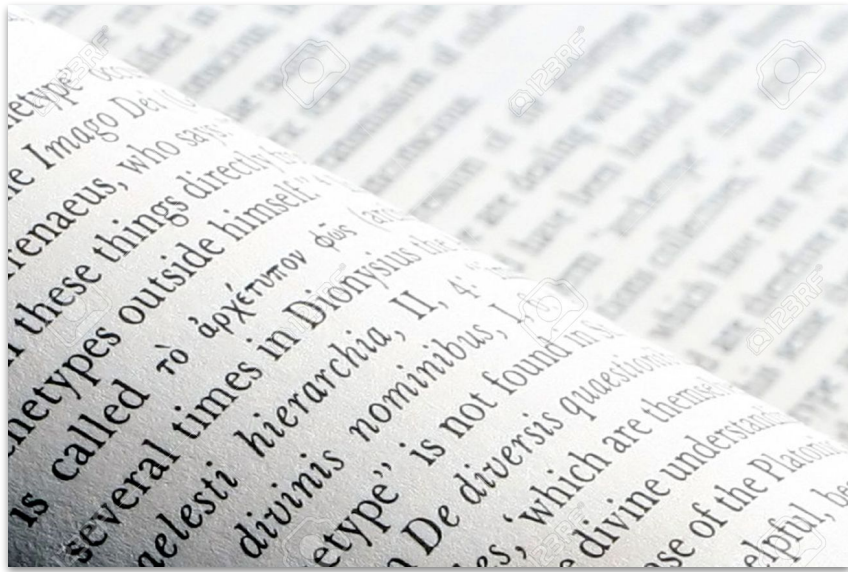
Genesis 1-2

*The Creation Story = not
interested in giving us exact
scientific history but divine truth
w/ historical implications*

1. There is only one God, and God is not a physical body.
 2. The universe is an ordered, intelligible totality created by God
 3. The human person is made in God's image as male & female, made for truth & love
 4. Human marriage & the transmission of life is fundamental to God's plan for creation
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SCIENTISM



THE CLAIM THAT "SCIENCE" COULD EVER PROVIDE A TOTAL UNDERSTANDING OF REALITY AS A WHOLE OVERLOOKS THE RATHER GLARING FACT THAT MEANING, TRUTH, BEAUTY, MORALITY, PURPOSE, ETC., ARE ALL INGREDIENTS IN "THE UNIVERSE." THE SCIENTIFIC METHOD CANNOT, EVEN IN PRINCIPLE, EXPLORE SUCH MATTERS.



Theistic Evidences

Does God exist?

How would we know?



POP TARTS IN THE PANTRY FALLACY

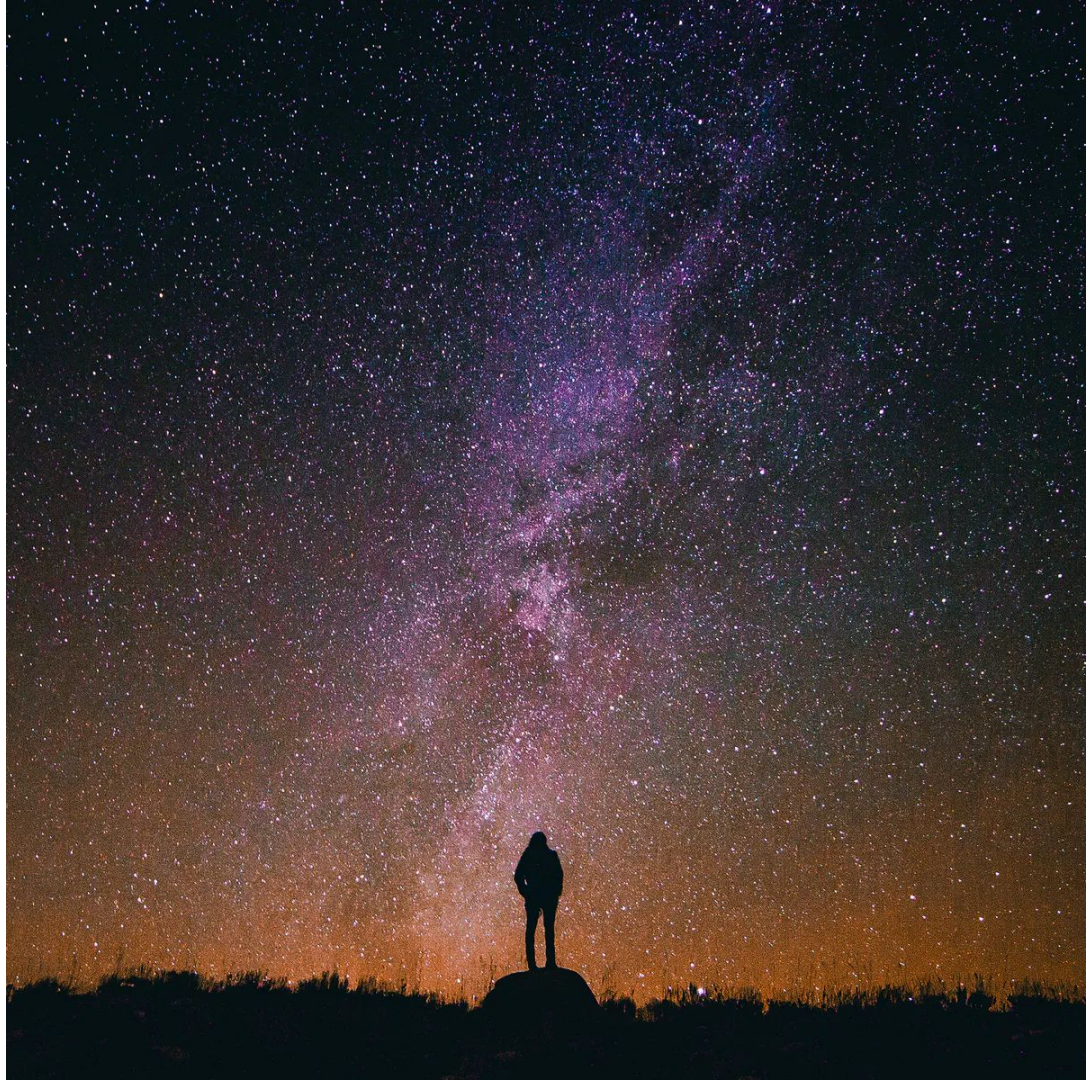
The Yeti Theory of God



GOD IS "IPSUM ESSE
SUBSISTENCE"

OR

GOD IS "THE SHEER
ACT OF TO-BE
ITSELF"



Four Good Reasons to Think God Exists:

- 1) God is the best explanation why anything exists rather than nothing. (Contingency Argument)
- 2) God is the best explanation for the beginning of the universe. (Kalam Cosmological Argument)
- 3) God is the best explanation for the Fine-Tuning of the universe for intelligent life. (Fine-Tuning Argument)
- 4) God is the best explanation for objective moral truth. (Moral Argument)

Marriage & Family

What is marriage?

What is the nature of the sex?

Two Competing Views - The Revisionist View of Marriage

The Revisionist view = *marriage is an emotional union or companionship*

What makes a marriage different in this view from other forms of friendship is its degree of emotional union or intensity or priority

What differentiates marriage from other relationships is its intensity

A publicly recognized commitment between two adults for their fulfillment



“The relationship you have with your Number One Person” - John Corvino

Two Competing Views - The **Conjugal** View of Marriage

The Conjugal view = *marriage is the institution that unites a man and a woman to each other and to any children born from their union.*

Marriage is fulfilled, or consummated, by the conjugal act, by which a man and woman coordinate their whole selves toward a shared end - namely, unity and procreation. It's **comprehensive** because it involves the whole two people - bodies, minds, and hearts - both uniting toward a single goal - Common action + Common end or goal + Commitment



Comparing the Two Views in Light of the Marital Norms

The Revisionist view = marriage is an emotional union or companionship

1. ~~**Permanence**~~ → becomes an arbitrary restriction. Some couples might prefer it. Some might prefer something more temporary and renewable
2. ~~**Exclusivity**~~ → maybe sexual openness would actually foster the emotional union which is what makes the marriage on this view
3. ~~**Monogamy**~~ → Why couldn't group unions make a marriage?

The Conjugal view = marriage is the institution that unites a man and a woman to each other and to any children born from their union.

1. **Permanence** → If marriage is about uniting two spouses so they can create and raise children, permanence is crucial
2. **Exclusivity** → Since marriage is about uniting to create & raise children, it's evident couples should commit sexually to only one spouse
3. **Monogamy** → Marriage can only be between one man and one woman because only that pair can unite sexually in the type of act that produces children

**The Revisionist view can't
make sense out of marital
norms - Permanency,
Exclusivity, & Monogamy
become arbitrary**

The Conjugal view can make sense out of marital norms - Permanency, Exclusivity, & Monogamy flow logically from marriage as the comprehensive union of a man and a woman

—

Contraception is any
action taken before,
during, or after sex that
makes procreation
impossible

The Nonreligious Case Against Contraception

Approach 1: The health risks of hormonal contraception

→ It's bad for women's health

Approach 2: Contraception changes the way men view women

→ Enables men to turn women into things

Approach 3: Contraception undermines relationships and stable families

→ It threatens selfless love at the heart of healthy marriages and makes it easier for spouses to be unfaithful

Approach 4: The purpose of sex

→ Sex is the only activity that leads to the creation of new life

Human Sexuality

Same-sex attraction

Transgenderism

Big Ideas - What the Church Teaches About Homosexuality

1. Homosexual behavior is sinful, but same-sex attractions or feelings are not.
2. The Church rejects same-sex behavior not just because of the Bible but with reasons rooted in natural law and concern for the human person, reasons that even non-religious people can accept.
3. We must treat same-sex attracted people with respect, compassion, and sensitivity.
4. The Church calls same-sex attracted people to chastity and self-mastery, which they can achieve through prayer, grace, and true friendship.

Thoughtful Questions to Ask Transgender Advocates

1. “How do you define transgenderism, gender, and sex?”
2. “Why should we affirm people who feel their gender doesn’t match their body, but not people experiencing other forms of bodily dysphoria?”
3. “If it’s possible for people to be born ‘trapped in a body of the wrong sex,’ then why don’t identical twins of transgender people all identify as transgender?”
4. “What does it mean to be a man or woman?”
5. “When individuals feel conflicted about their gender identity, why is the only course of action to bring the body into closer conformity with their psychological state, rather than bringing their mind into line with their body?”

Abortion

What's at stake?

Where to begin the argument about abortion?

- ✓ “With the woman,” some would say without hesitation
 - It’s her body that’s at stake
 - Her choice
 - Her autonomy
- Many “pro-choice” arguments rely heavily on the claim that the prenatal child is not a person and does not deserve equal protection of the law
 - This fundamental, contested question about moral status and value must be explored before we can actually move on to speak about a woman’s bodily autonomy

Who or what is the fetus?
= what is the moral status of
the prenatal child?

The Pragmatist - Avoiding the Main Issue

- Women need abortion for important reasons
 - “What about . . .”
 - . . . women too poor to take care of a child?
 - . . . children who will be abused?
 - . . . the right to choose?
 - . . . overpopulation?
 - . . . rape?

→ Trot Out a Toddler (TOAT)



→ Imagine a woman is pregnant, poor, and has a toddler
may she euthanize the toddler because she's poor?



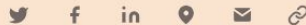
Stop Abortion Bans Rally, St. Paul, Minnesota, May 21, 2019.

I Asked Thousands of Biologists When Life Begins. The Answer Wasn't Popular



Steve Jacobs

16 Oct 2019 · 8 min read



Conclusion:

96% of the 5,577 biologists who responded affirmed the view that a human life begins at fertilization

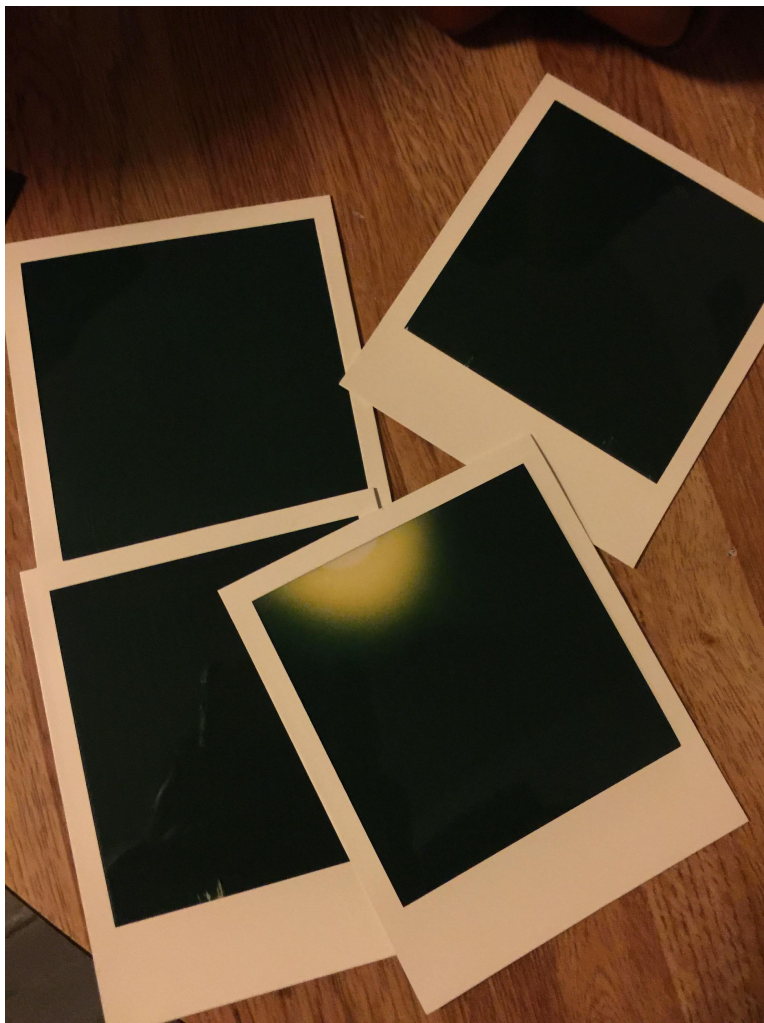
Link to study:

[The Scientific Consensus on When a Human's Life Begins](#)

Are the Unborn Human?

Biologically Human - 10-second proof

- ❑ If it's growing, isn't it alive?
 - Receiving nutrients and growing via cellular reproduction. What does abortion do? = embryo/fetus killed
- ❑ If it has human parents, isn't it human?
 - Members of the species *homo sapiens*. Human parents = human genetic code
 - Whole human organism; not a clump of cells, but a collection of biological parts or organs that function together to sustain the existence of a whole being that possess the qualities of life.
- ❑ And human beings like you and me are valuable, aren't we?
 - The philosophical concept of a human being (a being worthy of a right to life)

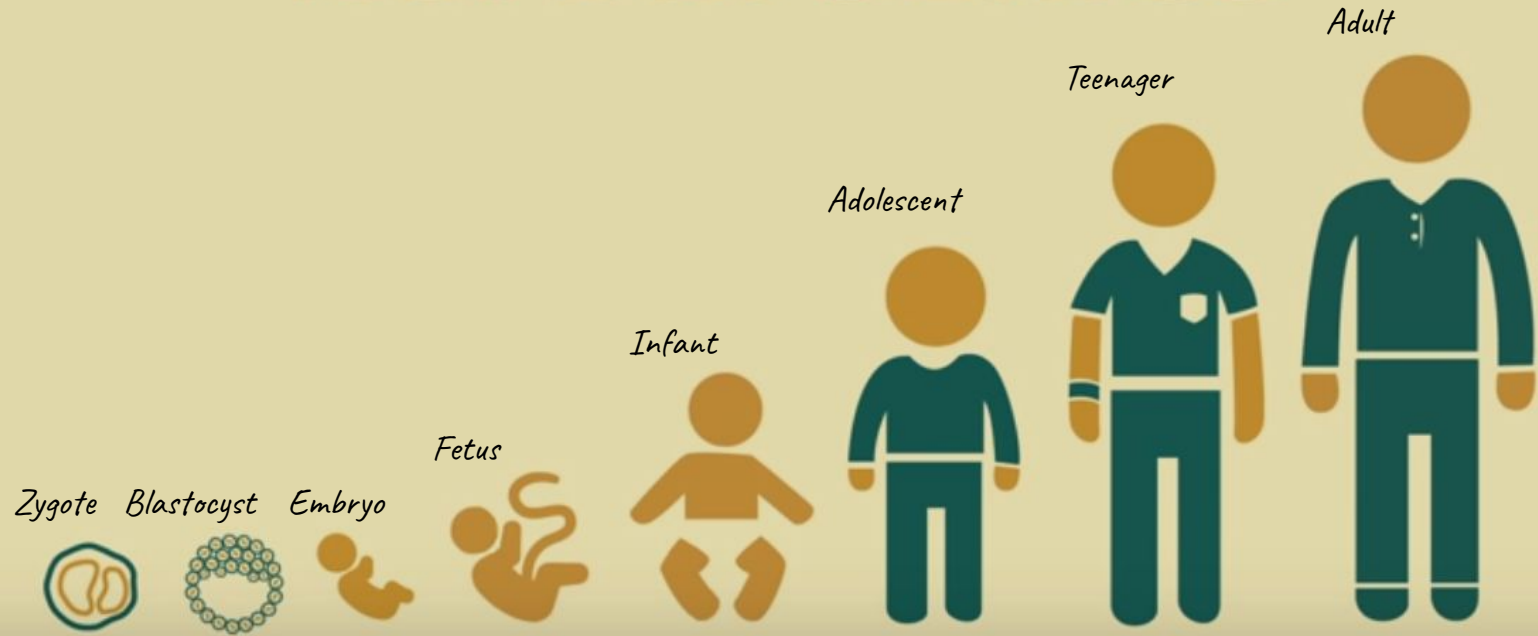


THE EXAMPLE OF A POLAROID PICTURE



An embryo or fetus does not become human as it gets older any more than a Polaroid picture becomes more of a Polaroid picture as it gets older. It develops, or unveils what it was from the beginning of its existence

HUMAN BEINGS



Are the Unborn Human? - What is a Person?

Philosophical Definition of a Human (“valuable human being”)

- ❑ All human beings differ in size, intelligence, skin color, gender, and physical ability. ***Degreed qualities***
- ❑ Our right to life must be based in something a human being either does or doesn't have - being the member of a rational kind = our human nature
- ❑ Being a member of a rational kind is a ***categorical property***. You either have it or you don't, like “being alive” or “being pregnant”

S = Size

L = Level of Development

E = Environment

D = Degree of Dependency